United Nations S/2017/302

Security Council

Distr.: General
11 April 2017
English
Original: French

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the state of the nation address delivered by His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on Wednesday, 5 April 2017 to a joint session of both Houses of Parliament (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ignace **Gata Mavita wa Lufuta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

Dear compatriots,

Following my previous state of the nation address in November 2016, the socioeconomic, political and security situation of the country has compelled me to discharge this constitutional duty early.

Gloomy macroeconomic indicators and their understandable impact on purchasing power have caused public unease, while at the political level two stumbling blocks encountered during the negotiations being facilitated by the Inter-diocesan Centre of Kinshasa on the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, namely, the procedure for selecting the Prime Minister and appointing a new head of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord, have caused some concern.

With regard to security, a number of deplorable and unacceptable acts of barbarism have taken place in the province of Kasai Central and the surrounding areas, including the looting and desecration of places of worship, the rape and beheading of numerous women, of some 100 members of our police and army, of a number of civilians and of two experts working for the United Nations.

In their memory, and in the memory of all the sons and daughters of our country who have lost their lives since the start of the year in the service of this country and those who have passed away from natural causes, including the leader of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, I invite you to observe a minute's silence.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Speaker Deputies and Senators,

Dear compatriots,

In the first quarter of the year the security situation in the east of the country improved and peace is gradually returning to the lives of the people of Tanganyika and North and South Kivu, thanks to military operations carried out by our security forces and the outreach efforts of local authorities and community leaders. Such work must continue if we are to achieve lasting peace.

Yet we cannot pause to celebrate these positive developments, however justifiable that might be, because the epicentre of this crime wave is moving towards the centre of the country, where a local conflict had degenerated into deadly and indiscriminate violence perpetrated by militias that have become terrorists bent on raping, killing, burning and destroying everything in their path.

This situation, as you know, is at the heart of our deepest concerns.

The vexed question of how to resolve similar local tensions in the future has been addressed through a political and administrative process initiated by the central Government.

In the light of the unacceptable atrocities being committed against the civilian population and continued public unrest, which are threatening the peace and stability of our country, we have a constitutional obligation to pursue all legal channels to restore the authority of the State in that part of the Republic.

This is the background behind the orders I recently signed establishing an operational sector in the Kasais.

At the same time, the central Government has been instructed to strengthen its presence in the affected provinces through the ministers responsible for internal and customary affairs, with a view to finding political and administrative settlements to the numerous local conflicts reported across the country, with the support of the national association of traditional authorities of the Congo.

It is clear that all the alleged perpetrators of abuses and serious crimes against civilians will be brought to justice. To date, seven members of the armed forces, who have already been placed under arrest, will be held accountable for their actions in court.

Similarly, crimes committed by militias against innocent citizens, law enforcement officers and United Nations personnel will not go unpunished.

The perpetrators of such crimes, some of whom are already being investigated by military tribunals, will also be punished in accordance with the law.

The Government has already been instructed to provide all necessary assistance to aid these investigations.

In the meantime, I would appeal for calm in Kasai Central and urge the handful of young people who have been drawn into futile operations that have devastating consequences for people living in the provinces concerned to lay down their weapons and cease their criminal activities.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

I consider it my duty to recall once again the fragility of the fundamentals of our economic fabric, which are mainly directed towards the tertiary sector, and marked on the one hand by imports of essential items consumed by the Congolese people, items that we do not produce, and, on the other hand, by exports to industrialized countries of raw materials, our main source of budgetary revenue, but whose prices we do not control.

It goes without saying that until we change this paradigm, our economy will remain fragile and will continually be buffeted by upheavals in the international economic environment.

In the same vein, as long as our tax system remains burdensome, discriminatory and subject to heavy parafiscal taxation, the business environment will not be conducive to productive investment or tax compliance.

Today, we have grasped the magnitude of the challenge. We must act without further delay.

In addition to legitimate public investment, we must therefore exercise the option of promoting support for the productive private sector through, in particular,

direct support to small and medium-sized industries and small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those involved in agribusiness, whose activities are being conducted within the context of value chains.

Indeed, we must produce what we consume and, as I have already said, add value to our products intended not only for domestic consumption but also for export in order to make them more competitive.

Our country cannot indefinitely remain a vast market providing people from other countries with business and employment opportunities at the expense of its own people and economy.

Moreover, domestic resource mobilization efforts will be continued through an uncompromising struggle against customs fraud, tax fraud and smuggling, by means of necessary tax reforms and the imminent introduction of computerized taxpayer management systems, provided by competent experts, within our financial authorities.

Here, I would like to highlight the urgent need for the Government of the Republic, the National Assembly and the Senate to take productive steps to adopt, as soon as possible and during the current session, a new law on taxation and a law on public-private partnership, without neglecting to finalize the law amending certain provisions of the mining code, which amendment has been suspended for several months in both houses.

The Government will thus have solid tools to stabilize, structurally and over the long term, the current economic situation, before permanently reversing the worrisome current trend. Improving the social situation of our people depends on it.

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

Dear compatriots,

I would like to remind the youth of our country that the effective implementation of the appropriate policies pledged last November and intended to bring about their socioeconomic reintegration has begun.

The promotion of local entrepreneurship through the above-mentioned measures in support of the private sector and to bring about the entry into force of the law on subcontracting to local small and medium-sized enterprises and small and medium-sized industries is now an opportunity be seized.

Alongside these efforts, which will create several thousand jobs, companies in the State's portfolio have been instructed to prioritize the elimination of youth unemployment as part of their recovery plan.

As for State officials both civilian and military, the ongoing process of improving their living conditions will continue by means of downsizing and payroll reforms, which will ultimately make it possible to reallocate the savings achieved to gradual readjustments of their salaries.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

In keeping with what has become a political tradition in our country, since June 2015 I have exercised the option of involving the political and social class of our country in a dialogue in order to reach the consensus necessary to organize the third cycle of peaceful elections.

That initiative was in fact a follow-up to similar efforts in 2012 when I sought to secure a national consensus to defend the fatherland from pretended rebellions by convening national consultations that made it possible to strengthen our national cohesiveness and unite in supporting our army in its efforts to defend the fatherland.

Similarly, my desire for consensus again led me, in November 2015, to convene an inclusive national political dialogue facilitated internationally by the African Union.

That forum, which had itself been preceded by a preliminary dialogue between the majority and the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), organized in several European cities, led to the 18 October 2016 agreement, at the Cité de l'Union africaine, between the political opposition, civil society and the majority.

Although the agreement created a solid basis for meeting our expectations, I decided to give priority to the overarching need for inclusiveness with a view to securing a broader consensus of stakeholders in the electoral process by entrusting the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo with a mission of good offices with the opposition Rassemblement.

This is the place to commend the bishops of the Catholic church for their excellent work leading to the agreement of 31 December and certain areas of convergence on the modalities for implementing the agreement.

Sadly, in spite of their laudable efforts, which enabled 90 per cent of the expected results to be achieved, the stakeholders were unable to reach a consensus on two points, namely, the appointment of the Prime Minister and the chair of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord, as set forth in the final mediation report transmitted on 28 March this year (see S/2017/262).

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

I would like to reiterate that the goal of the dialogue was and remains the organization of peaceful elections.

In that regard, I congratulate our central electoral commission for its remarkable work carried out under extremely difficult conditions, leading to the registration of over 21.5 million voters with an estimated budget of 320 million dollars mainly from the Government itself.

I wish to solemnly inform our people that the elections will indeed go ahead. Doubters have no grounds for concern. Everything will be done to achieve this goal in accordance with the calendar set by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

The 18 October agreement, like the agreement of 31 December 2016 which secured the sought-after consensus on the order of elections and the electoral roll, once it was determined, and the distribution of seats, as determined by an act to be adopted by both chambers, nothing should preventing the election from going ahead.

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

Since this process is the work of the Congolese people and funded by the Congolese people themselves, no foreign interference in the organization, let alone the implementation, of the process will be tolerated.

As in any other State Member of the United Nations, it is a matter of domestic politics and therefore a matter of national sovereignty.

Our duty is precisely to defend national independence and sovereignty in accordance with the commitment made to our people under the terms of our constitutional oath.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

Dear compatriots,

Over the last 48 hours, I have listened to the political and social class that responded to my invitation. I noted a convergence of views, in particular over the urgent need to resolve two issues relating to the implementation of the agreement, especially when it comes to the appointment of a new Prime Minister.

In that regard, given the broad consensus on the procedure for appointing the Prime Minister and the powers of the appointing authority, I invite the Rassemblement to overcome its internecine squabbles and find a common approach to the list of prime ministerial candidates who have the required and agreed profile, as requested for several months, with a view to expediting the process of forming the new Government of national unity.

As I mentioned in my message of November 2016, and given that the country should no longer be held hostage by private interests and jockeying for position by political actors, the Prime Minister must be appointed within 48 hours.

As for the Presidency of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord, I request both chambers of the parliament to adopt, without delay, the related organization act, and call for expedited discussions within the political class to appoint, as soon as the new Government takes office, a mutually agreed upon figure to head that body.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Speaker of the Senate,

Honourable Deputies and Senators,

Dear compatriots,

As before, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is destined not for failure but for emergence. Since its current difficulties have been clearly identified, appropriate responses are being found.

I am convinced that with the involvement of everyone, from the opposition to civil society and the majority, and most of all with the support of our people, we will be able to overcome the challenges we face, and our beautiful country will survive the apocalyptic and ill-intentioned predictions of its critics.

God bless our country!

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you.